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13.—*Man and Nature, or Physical Geography as modified by Human Action.* By GEORGE P. MARSH. New York: Charles Scribner. 1864. pp. 560.

MR. MARSH'S former volumes on the history and etymology of the English language did more, we think, than anything before written by an American, to win respect for our scholarship abroad. Disclaiming any attempt at strictly scientific method, and without having made philology a specialty, they showed a knowledge at once so particular and comprehensive, and a scholarship so securely up to the level of the latest achievements in that study, that they took rank at once as the most interesting, and in many high qualities the most valuable, contribution to our knowledge of English since Horne Tooke. The present work shows the same breadth of view, the same power of various illustration, the same conscientiousness of statement, the same integrity of judgment; and we cannot but think it fortunate that the United States should be represented in a country where scholarship is valued by a man who is himself a type of our highest civilization, and whose whole tone of thought and balance of character show that we are no longer provincial.

As men grow older, they become more Aristotelian and less Platonic. They want something more solid than the ideal butter of speculation to make their parsnips palatable, and they would rather have one parsnip grown in the solid earth of observation and experience, than all the air-plants that ever grew in the thin atmosphere of theory. What is true of the individual man seems to be true also of the race. Facts grow to be of more and more value, and the main concern is to be sure that they are what they pretend to be. The value we set on accurate knowledge is remarkable, and shows how dear truth is, after all, to the human heart. A country parson or doctor with a good thermometer, and the single talent of exactly observing and recording its readings for fifty years, runs a fairer chance of having his works remembered and cited after his death than one in a thousand of his contemporary authors. There is a vast difference, however, in the quality of fact-collectors. There are the indiscriminate gatherers, impelled by an irresistible magpie instinct, who add to their indigested heap whatever is light enough to be carried, and hoard with equal pleasure a glass bead or a gold coin of Syracuse.

“They have strange places crammed  
With observation, the which they vent  
In mangled forms.”

And there are the rarer minds, impelled by a real hunger for knowledge, who select and classify, making a museum, and not a mere collection. Yet even the former class are not without their value, and

Athenæus has been of more service to posterity than many far superior men.

There is a charm also in personal observation, and we like to associate the man with the fact. It is this that gives a special interest to such books as White's *Selborne*, and the ornithologies of Wilson and Nuttall. Mr. Marsh belongs to the higher order of men, who organize experience, who make inductions as well as gather the materials for them. His mind drains a vast surface of knowledge, and he not only sees clearly to the farthest corners of earth through the windows of books, but his own eye is watchful, and his memory carries a fact observed in Vermont till he can match and confirm it in Egypt or Italy. We have found his book a delightful one. It suggests thought and pleases the fancy at the same time ; for while it implies long study, and has the peculiar library aroma in it, yet its character is such that it seems as if all its books had been found in running brooks, and you are now in the forest, now on the mountain, as you read. It deals with the two subjects most interesting to man,—himself and the world he lives in,—and shows how the two, naturally friendly, become hostile for want of mutual understanding. You have science drawn from the highest sources, and facts from the humblest. Side by side with Humboldt, whose intelligence laid the whole earth under contribution, we find a neighbor from Vermont with his thermometer, or his bit of experience about a saw-mill.

Some of the facts cited by Mr. Marsh to show the wasteful and short-sighted energy of man as a destroying agent, almost seem to justify the old cynical view of the race as a tribe of ants. One would think that we were gradually eating out the heart of the old tree Igdrasil, till it was in danger of crashing down about our ears before long. Consider, for example, that we are burning up forests so fast in our lucifer-matches as to risk the extermination of the pine ; that our unthrifty woodcraft is changing the climate and productions of entire provinces ; that we are draining the earth of its vital sap as if it were a sugar-maple. As we read, we feel a ghastly apprehension, like that of Chaplain Schmelzle, lest suddenly all the oxygen be abstracted from the air. But, on the whole, Mr. Marsh's volume is consoling ; for, proving as it does the power of man for mischief, it suggests also that the same prodigious force, intelligently organized and guided, may be equally potent for remedy and the restoring of equilibrium. One striking reflection suggested by it is the usefulness of every particle of organized and unorganized matter, not only for special and immediate ends, such as food, warmth, light, and the like, but also as parts of a mighty and intelligible system. We are incidentally led, too, as Mr. Marsh more than once pointedly hints, to reflect upon the rights and duties of govern-

ment, as preventive and advisory, and to feel that there is a common interest which vastly transcends the claims of individual freedom of action. A book so interesting and instructive, which will lure the young to observe and take delight in Nature, and the mature to respect her rights as essential to their own well-being, which pleads the cause of birds and beasts and trees, we welcome as a public benefaction. We hope it may find its way into every school and town library in the country.

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14.—*Lyrics of a Day: or Newspaper-Poetry.* By a Volunteer in the United States Service. New York: Carleton. 1864. 12mo. pp. 160.

WHITTIER is the only one of our older poets whom the war seems adequately to have inspired. On most of them, as on Hawthorne, our greatest imaginative genius, of whose powers we cannot bear to think that they "are frozen at their marvellous source," its influence seems to have been benumbing. Bryant, it is true, gave us one noble lyric, but has been too busy in more useful, if less grateful service, which has put the whole country forever in his debt, to have his intense and thoughtful patriotism set us the tune of our feelings in verse. Generally, the noise of the guns seems to have scared away or silenced our singing-birds. But the author of the volume before us (Mr. H. H. Brownell) is a true stormy-petrel, whom the war of elements seems rather to make joyous than to daunt. In him the nation has found a new poet, vigorous, original, and thoroughly native. His poetry shows the singular and charming combination of the sailor and the scholar. It is off soundings, in blue water; there is the rush of sea and the rattle of spray in it, and our terrible typhoon seems to put him in spirits and give him the full wakefulness of all his faculties. We have had no such war poetry, nor anything like it. His "River Fight" (published since the volume) is the finest lyric of the kind since Drayton's "Battle of Agincourt." The poem "At Sea" (p. 83) shows the range of his quality in its pathetic tenderness. His faults are a want of clearness, here and there, from over-condensation in spots, and in some of his finest pieces a crowding of incidents to the injury of effect as a whole. But it is a volume to make one breathe deeper and tread firmer, and stirs us like a beating to quarters for the good fight. Nor should we forget to say, that neither sentiment nor humor is wanting in its place.